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JAMES ALTON JAMES









*James Alton*

J A M E S

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*A Short Biography by*

VERNON R. LOUCKS

*Published for the Friends & Former Students of*

*Professor James by*

*Northwestern University Press*

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## INTRODUCTION

ON JUNE 15, 1935, WALTER DILL SCOTT, President of Northwestern University, sent the following statement to Professor James:

AN APPRECIATION OF JAMES ALTON JAMES

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees*

*of Northwestern University*

*Evanston, Illinois, June 15, 1935*

To you, James Alton James, Northwestern University this day extends her profoundest gratitude. Your services have been long, many, varied, and ever on a plane of the highest quality.

As a teacher of history in the University for thirty-eight years you have inspired thousands of students with your interpretation of our nation's record and your emphasis on her finest purposes and highest ideals. History has not been misread in your classroom. Truth has been your guide and mentor, and you have been a faithful follower.

As a research scholar, you have contributed eminently to your profession and your field. As author and editor, you have set the highest standards of both method and accomplishment. Your conclusions on western history during the period of the American Revolution have been important, impressive, and definitive.

As an administrator, you have contributed nobly and untiringly to Northwestern University. As head of the department of history for many years, you gave freely of your time to building up and guiding one of the larger departments of the College. As Dean of the Graduate School from 1913 to 1931, and as an active member of its committees before and after that time, you have largely created the Northwestern University Graduate School. In that work you sought standards before numbers and achieved both. Others will build further, but the foundation and the lower stories of the edifice are yours.

Lastly, as a citizen of Evanston, the state of Illinois, the United States, and the world, you have ever been active, influential, and on the right side of things. Your services to community, church, and nation have been constant, untiring, and exemplary. Neither cloistered scholar nor narrow academician, you have shown your colleagues not only how to teach, but also how to live.

This volume is an attempt briefly to record the life of one who accomplished so much for Northwestern University, for the Methodist Church, for the cause of religion generally, and for the community in which he lived. The quantities of letters from his former students who are now university presidents, chairmen of university history departments, professors, teachers in high schools, and leaders in business, professions, and government all over the world, expressing gratitude for his inspiring help and leadership, are a striking tribute to one of the most constructive and useful lives of his generation.



JAMES ALTON JAMES



## C H A P T E R I

### *Youth*

JAMES ALTON JAMES was born on September 17, 1864, in the little village of Jefferson in the lead mining district of southwestern Wisconsin, where he spent his early life. William and Mary James, parents of his father, John R. James, had come to the United States from Truro in the county of Cornwall, England, early in the 1830's. Alton, as he was called in his youth, was one of three children in the family.

#### *Farming Experience*

AT TWELVE YEARS of age Alton rode one of the lead horses in a farmer's four-horse team which pulled a reaper in cutting a field of oats. The task of riding round the field from seven in the morning until sundown, with only one hour of rest at noon, was tire-

some and monotonous. But it was rewarding, with the pay of twenty-five cents a day.

It was at this time in the harvest fields of southern Wisconsin that Alton on various occasions noted scenes of conflict between manpower and machinery. The invention of the self-binder harvester, which bound the bundles of grain with cord, was a development that made the labor of seven men unnecessary. Occasionally the antagonism of the laborers toward the introduction of these machines was so great that machines were burned during the night.

### *Enters Normal School*

THERE WAS LITTLE IN FARM LIFE that had an appeal for Alton. His father was a miner and a smelter, and those occupations were not alluring. At fifteen years of age, he decided to make the attempt to secure further education in the State Normal School at Plattville, Illinois, although he had no definite goal in mind. After a term of twelve weeks, continuation in the school's preparatory department was mainly dependent upon the students' passing a written spelling test.

At the close of his freshman year, Alton had an experience which later enabled him to be sympathetic and helpful to his students. After a few days at home during the spring vacation he returned to Plattville,



## *Enters Normal School*

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but he was unable to give attention to school tasks and finally, against the advice of President McGregor, he decided to go home. No appeals by his parents could induce him to return before the following September. This overpowering longing for home was not overcome until the end of his sophomore year, when his mother suddenly died. On all problems he had sought her guidance, which had restored his confidence in days of discouragement.

### *Meeting with Janie*

WALKING TO CLASSES AT PLATTVILLE with a young woman as companion led ultimately to their decision to continue walking together through life. This resolution was made when they were each seventeen years of age. Jane (Janie) Thomas, whose home was at Montfort, Wisconsin, was conceded to be the most beautiful coed in the school and was a favorite among the students, both men and women, because of her ability as a student and as a leader in support of the highest standards.

### *Early Teaching Experience*

THE CHIEF PROBLEM before Alton's class was

whether the high schools of southern Wisconsin would have teaching positions open for the graduates. On a call from President Duncan McGregor, Alton went to his office to be interviewed by the chairman of the high school board of Mineral Point, Wisconsin. After the conference the chairman said, "Well, young man, your qualifications as a student undoubtedly fit you for the place. But you are too young". President McGregor's remark, "He will get over it in time," did not change the verdict.

Fortunately, within a few days Alton was offered the position of assistant principal of the high school at Dodgeville, Wisconsin. His \$45.00-a-month salary was adequate to meet all expenditures and leave a small balance. His room and board amounted to \$3.25 a week.

### *General Grant's Memorial*

AT THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST YEAR, he received a contract for the next year, giving him a salary boost of \$15.00 a month. With this increase he determined to take a six weeks' summer school course in German at Saratoga, New York, together with his friend W. W. Jones. Going to Saratoga was a special interest, because General Ulysses S. Grant, then an invalid, was at the time at Mount McGregor, ten miles distant. As

a small boy, Alton had been permitted to go to Galena, the nearby home town of General Grant, who had been engaged in a small leather business before the outbreak of the Civil War. Alton had gone to Galena to witness the return and honor accorded the general by national leaders and thousands of visitors from Illinois and Wisconsin, following his trip around the world.

Upon the death of General Grant, while Alton was at Saratoga, the memorial service in honor of the great Civil War general was held in New York City. *The New York Times* stated: "At a moderate estimate, trains and boats must have added half a million to the population of Manhattan Island. Such a mighty outpouring of people in the streets, such a marshaling of men in one array, the inhabitants of New York never saw."

Alton stood in the aisle on the overcrowded train to New York City from Saratoga during the night before the memorial service. Seats in temporary stands could be obtained, but the prices seemed prohibitive. Soap boxes, however, could be purchased at fifty cents each, and by standing on one Alton was able to see over the lines in front of him. Following the marshal, General Winfield Scott Hancock, came the President of the United States, Grover Cleveland; the Vice-President and members of the Cabinet; former cabinet members; two ex-Presidents; judges of the Supreme

Court; senators and representatives; the governor of New York and governor of a dozen other states; ministers of foreign countries; members of the state legislature; and representatives of clubs and organizations of New York and other cities.

Never, in imagination, had Alton ever been able to construct such a scene. Here was one illustration of the inherent strength of the American nation.

*Enters the University of Wisconsin*

FOLLOWING HIS SECOND YEAR AT DODGEVILLE, Alton decided to enter the University of Wisconsin. Shortly after his arrival in Madison, he secured a teaching position in the Wisconsin Academy, a preparatory school for entrance to the university. This gave him an income sufficient to cover his expenses for the next two years. Alton was much impressed with Dr. John Bascom, his teacher in science and ethics, who was president of the university. Frederick Jackson Turner, who later became an outstanding authority on history of the frontier but was then an instructor in the university, once said to one of the students, "Not take Bascom's classes! Haven't you noticed the students go in boys and girls and come out men and women?"

President Bascom was extremely independent and refused to follow the dictates of E. W. Keyes, chair-

man of the executive committee of the board of regents and the leading political power in Wisconsin, familiarly called "Boss Keyes." Because of his differences with "Boss Keyes," Dr. Bascom finally resigned his position as president of the university. His successor, Dr. Thomas Chowder Chamberlain, a noted geologist, met with considerable opposition from the student body because of their great loyalty to Dr. Bascom.

The small wooden gym with little apparatus and with no special director in charge attracted but few men. After much urging, enough men were induced to organize a football team with one of their members as coach. Baseball was more popular, and there were contests between fraternities and other campus organizations. Alton played first base on the team of the McKinnon Club. A varsity team was organized, and games were scheduled with Beloit, Racine, and Northwestern. These intercollegiate games attracted small crowds of students, who stood on the sidelines, for no grandstand had been provided. The Class Day exercises for commencement in 1888 took the usual form, and Alton was valedictorian of his class.

Following graduation, he was elected superintendent of schools at Darlington, Wisconsin, a city of some 2,500 population. His salary was \$1,000.00 for nine months. The following year it was increased by \$150.00. He had taken three degrees in the Blue Lodge of the Masonic Order when he was Dodgeville,

and in Darlington he continued to attend meetings of the lodge.

*Tries Business*

HIS FRIEND WILLIAM T. JENNINGS had built a bookstore into a prosperous business in Plattville and proposed that Alton should become associated with him as a partner. This seemed attractive at the time, since it would enable him to have a home in the town where he had attended the Normal School and had many friends. After a test of two months, however, Alton became convinced—and Janie agreed—that while a life devoted to business might bring financial success, it would not give him the real satisfaction he had found in teaching.



## CHAPTER I I

### *The Young Teacher*

FOLLOWING the advice of Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles H. Haskins, professors of history at the University of Wisconsin who had received their Ph.D.'s at Johns Hopkins, Alton early in 1890 went to Baltimore and registered at Johns Hopkins as a graduate student. He took a major in history under Professor Herbert Boscher Adams and a minor in Economics under Professor Richard T. Ely—two of the noted scholars of that time. Among the other widely known lecturers before the graduate seminar was Woodrow Wilson, a Johns Hopkins Ph.D., professor of political science at Princeton. Alton lived in the same boardinghouse as Professor Wilson and was privileged to accompany him on some of his walks in Druid Hill Park.

During the year 1891 the University of Wisconsin, in promoting its program of graduate work, was

successful in securing Professor Ely as chairman of the group of the social sciences. He had never visited the University of Wisconsin and sought information from Alton about the university and Madison. The friendly relationship continued through many years.

Professor Adams, in his lectures before the seminar, frequently stressed the necessity for the students to carry on some special research which might finally be published. Following a conference with him, Alton selected a suggested topic in American colonial history, "English Institutions and the American Indians," about which he knew very little. He was able to find little documentary material bearing on the subject in the Johns Hopkins library or that of the Peabody Institute of Baltimore. He felt confident that the Draper Collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society would contain such material, but this could be ascertained only by spending some weeks in Madison during the summer vacation.

*Returns to the University of Wisconsin*

A LETTER from the principal of the Wisconsin Academy in Madison, where Alton had taught during his undergraduate days, stated that because of illness he was forced to take a vacation during the spring term. He tendered the position to Alton.



Professor Adams agreed to the proposal that Alton should go to Madison in order to accept the position, carry on research in the Historical Society, and if possible enter the seminar of Professor Turner, whom Professor Adams regarded as one of the most promising of the students who had taken a Ph.D. degree under his direction.

During the summer session of the University of Wisconsin, Alton became a member of a seminar under Professor Turner on "The Indian Factory System." The paper giving the results of his research was forwarded to Professor Adams, who recommended it for publication in the *National Magazine of American History*, where it appeared the following May. Of even greater interest was a letter from Professor Adams stating that Alton was to be appointed graduate scholar in history for the ensuing year, an honor which carried with it a year's tuition. The reply of Professor Turner to a letter from Professor Adams January 18, 1892, commented: "We are indeed proud of the success that James has received."

During the year 1892 Alton served as secretary of the Graduate Students' Association, which was sponsored by Professor Adams and included members of the seminars of other departments. He was assigned the task of writing a review of Professor Albert Bushnell Hart's "Epoch Maps in American History," which was printed in the *Educational Review*.

In conversation with Professor Adams, Alton learned that he was to be awarded the graduate fellowship in history for the following year, a top honor of the department yielding three hundred dollars and tuition.

*Marries Janie*

JANIE AND ALTON had decided earlier in the year that their marriage was not again to be postponed and that it would be possible for Janie to continue as a student in piano at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. The marriage took place in her home, September 14, 1892.

*Passes Ordeal for Ph.D. Degree*

CANDIDATES for the degree of doctor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins approached the end of the year with much apprehension. In addition to written and oral tests, there was a special oral examination for one hour—an ordeal never to be forgotten. The candidate was required to appear in a meeting composed of the professors of the several departments and was subjected to quizzing on any topic connected with his major or first minor. Alton feared that Professor Basil



Janie James in 1900.



L. Gildersleeve, leading Greek scholar in America, might open a devastating attack with some question on Athenian or Spartan history or that Professor Minton Warren of the Latin department or Professor James W. Bright of the English department would follow with some unsuspected question from their special fields. Finally, the longest sixty minutes he had ever endured came to an end, and shortly thereafter Alton received the degree of doctor of philosophy. He also was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

After receiving his degree, Dr. James and Janie spent some days in Chicago, visiting the World's Fair of 1893. They experienced the sensation that was so well described by their later friend, Thomas E. Talmadge, in his volume *The Story of Architecture in America*.

The exposition is completed, with its banners floating in the breeze, its fountains splashing in the sunshine, its lagoons troubled by the course of the launches and gondolas which crashed into a million fragments the fairy visions reflected on their breasts, its emerald lawns jewelled with flowers and birds, and its tremendous and many palaces with regal equipment of terraces, bridges, and esplanades all bathed in sunshine against the azure setting of the lake, furnished a spectacle unequalled in the history of the world for the magnificence of its beauty. Imperial Rome in the third century might have

approached but surely did not surpass it. Such was the conviction of my boyhood, and thirty-five years of increasing sophistication, which have included most of the architectural spectacles of the generation, have not dimmed the splendor of that picture nor changed in my mind the schoolboy's verdict.

*Teaching at Cornell College*

IN THE FALL of 1893 Dr. and Mrs. James went to Mount Vernon, Iowa, where he was to teach in Cornell College. When they arrived in the evening they rode up the hill to the hotel in an antiquated bus lighted with a single lamp on the dashboard. Alton called the attention of the driver to the fact that he had dropped one of the lines. But the driver made no effort to recover it from the heels of the horses and said, "We'll git there just the same." The horses, without any command from the driver, turned into the hotel and stopped.

The next day when Alton and his wife saw the unpainted cottage in which they were to live—where heat for the study was obtained through a vent in the ceiling from a coal stove in the living room and where water was brought from a well a block distant in a neighbor's yard—they thought that perhaps "we'll git there just the same."

Dr. James coached the baseball team in the spring and accompanied the track team to meets away from the campus. There was no enclosed field and no admission charge.

In January 1894, he received a letter from Professor Turner of the University of Wisconsin, which forced a decision as to whether Dr. James should change to an administrative position. Professor Turner had been asked to assist in securing a president for the new state normal school about to be opened at Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The position was tendered to, but was not accepted by, Dr. James.

### *Extra Activities*

WHILE HE WAS AT CORNELL, Dr. James organized and promoted debating between the four literary societies, leading to the final contest between two teams for the championship. At his suggestion, space in one of basements was made into a substitute for a gymnasium. Simple equipment was procured, paid for by admission fees to a course of lectures by some of the nation's noted men, which Dr. James arranged. He also promoted college extension courses in a number of Iowa cities.





## CHAPTER III

### *Northwestern University*

I<sup>N</sup> 1897 President Henry Wade Rogers invited Dr. James to become professor of history at Northwestern University. Although he had rejected other offers to leave Cornell College, at a higher salary than he was receiving, Dr. James was impressed with the possibilities at Northwestern. He considered President Rogers an outstanding leader. He was much impressed by the reputation of the faculty, a number of whom had been brought to the University by President Rogers during the seven preceding years. He was especially impressed by professors Bonbright, Marcy, Coe, Hough, Baird, Locy, Crew, White, Holgate, Gray, Clark, Hatfield, and Curme. A number of them had received the degree of doctor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins or one of the German universities.

Shortly after his arrival, Professor James went to the office of Professor Locy to secure his signature on

some papers. He found a line of students seated waiting for consultation. As Professor James proceeded to place the papers on Professor Locy's desk, the latter looked at him and said sharply, "You will go back to the end of the line and come up in turn." Professor James took the last chair and advanced, chair by chair, as he had been ordered to do. When he finally placed the papers on Professor Locy's desk the latter asked, "Are you Professor James?" That was the beginning of a lifetime friendship.

*Discouragements at Northwestern*

THERE WAS LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT in the situation with which Professor James was confronted in meeting his three classes in European history for the first recitations in the fall of 1897. The total registration was only fifty-six. This did not equal the number in one of his classes at Cornell College.

The University library contained 48,675 volumes and 13,000 pamphlets, including the Greenleaf Collection of 11,200 volumes, rich in the classics, and the Schneider Collection of 1,400 volumes, containing many originals of standard German authors. But there was little material for research in American or English history.

The courses of Dr. Robert D. Sheppard, who headed

the history department, did not include any suggestion for research by graduate students, as was done in some of the departments. Professor James was assured by President Rogers of his support in having a graduate course in American history assigned him at Northwestern, but the decision was dependent on the attitude of Dr. Sheppard. President Rogers' recommendation that Professor James be permitted to add to his duties in 1898-99 a seminar in American history, intended primarily for graduate students, was accepted by Dr. Sheppard. Fifteen hundred dollars was voted by the trustees for the purchase of additional material for the course, which was elected by five graduates. This was the beginning of graduate study in the department. The total number of all resident graduates in the university that year was only thirty.

In his formal report to the trustees for 1899-1900, President Rogers summarized the history of the university during his administration and stressed the necessity for future development. In 1889 the value of the university property was \$2,099,060. By 1899 this amounted to \$5,045,648. The attendance of students in all schools during 1889 was 1,692, and 10 years later was 2,971. They came from 40 different states and 16 foreign countries. During 1889 the year courses in the College of Liberal Arts numbered 35. Ten years later 177 such courses were presented.

*President Rogers' Program*

IN SPITE OF MANY DISCOURAGEMENTS, Professor James was thrilled by President Rogers' annual report to the trustees, June 10, 1900. The president made an appeal for the trustees' support in carrying out his plan for increasing the financial resources of the university. His appeal for a half-century fund of \$2,000,000 was for the erection of the most needed new buildings—a gymnasium to cost \$100,000, a chapel for the same amount, a natural science and museum building, \$100,000, and dining halls, \$50,000. One million dollars would be devoted to the further development of the corps of instruction, to enlarging the contents of the library, and to perfecting its administration. The executive committee of the board of trustees approved President Rogers' recommendation, but it declined to assume the duty of undertaking the canvass and placed that responsibility on the president. The decision led to President Rogers' resignation on July 15, 1900. This was a great disappointment to Professor James, since the principal reason for his decision to transfer from Cornell to Northwestern had been President Rogers.

Immediately following his resignation Dr. Rogers became a professor in the Yale University School of Law, serving there until 1921. From 1903 to 1916

he was dean of the Law School, to which he added great prestige. In 1913 he was appointed judge of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals (second circuit, New York City) by Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, and served in that office until 1926.

In presenting Judge Rogers for the honorary degree of doctor of laws in 1915, Dean John H. Wigmore cited him as "an educational organizer who welded together the departments of this university, and mapped the lines of its progress for a generation.

It has been said of President Rogers that he developed Northwestern from a college to a university.

On July 19, 1900, by the unanimous vote of the executive committee of the board of trustees of Northwestern University, Daniel Bonbright, professor of Latin language and literature, was elected president ad interim.

### *Trip to Europe*

IN JUNE 1901 Professor and Mrs. James carried out a plan they had contemplated for some time—going to Europe. The first objective was to attend the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the founding of the University of Glasgow, to which Dr. James had been appointed a delegate representing Northwestern University.

During the year 1901-2 Professor James served as

president of the North Central History Teachers Association. Membership in this organization included professors of history, civics, and economics in eighty-seven of the universities, colleges, normal schools, and leading high schools of the North Central states.

The study of American government in high schools had been recommended by a committee of seven of the American Historical Association. This implied the need for a text on the subject. Albert H. Sanford, a friend of Professor James' normal school years, was a teacher at the Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Normal School. He accepted the suggestion that they cooperate in writing a textbook on American government. This resulted in the preparation of the text *Government in State and Nation* published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1901. This volume met the approval of high school teachers and was adopted by a large number of high schools throughout the United States. The text *Our Government*, by the same authors, was written for use in the elementary schools and was also received with substantial favor.

### *Becomes Department Chairman*

PRIOR TO 1902 Dr. Sheppard, chairman of the history department at Northwestern University, was also a member of the board of trustees and treasurer and busi-



ness manager of the university, as well as treasurer and trustee of Garrett Biblical Institute. He was probably the most influential person in the direction of university affairs. He had built and lived in a large home on the beautiful grounds later owned and occupied by General Charles G. Dawes. After Dr. Rogers' resignation, Dr. Sheppard lacked only one vote of being elected president of the university. He would have become president except for the strong opposition of William A. Dyche, one of the trustees.

For some years it was the practice of Dr. Sheppard, together with William Deering, president of the board of trustees, and several other trustees to walk around the campus on Sunday mornings and discuss and make plans for the university. That group was jokingly referred to as the "Crocodile Club" after Mr. Deering sent them a crocodile from his home in Florida.

Professor James, while he was greatly impressed with President Rogers' ideals of scholarship and research and his interest in graduate work, had been, for the first five years of his service at Northwestern, disappointed and discouraged by what he considered the lack of any substantial progress toward those ideals in the history department. But in 1902 Dr. Sheppard discontinued all his official relations with the university and moved to Texas. Mr. Dyche became business manager, and Professor James became chairman of the department of history.

*Teaching Objectives*

PROFESSOR JAMES' IDEAS on the teaching of history are somewhat epitomized in his statement to the Kansas State Teachers' Association in 1913. He said in part:

The man on horseback has usually been made the central figure of our textbook. Our attention has been called at great length to the maneuver and battle. While the effects of Marathon, of Tours, of Yorktown, of Port Arthur, and of other world contests ought to be given a place and the names of Frederick the Great, of Napoleon, of Washington, of Grant, and of Lee will always cause our hearts to beat a little more rapidly, teachers of history should recognize more and more and exalt the work of other men who, as diplomats, as counselors, or as plain men gave themselves just as truly, and accomplished results quite as undying in the development of nations.

The history of today demands that we shall know China and Japan. We cannot, if we would, get away from our European background and our Asiatic foreground, as long as *immigration* and *colonial possessions* are words to conjure with. Nor ought we to get away from them if history and government and economics—the social sciences, in other words—are to be taught as a means of enlightenment, as a means of development.



## *Teaching Objectives*

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And if properly taught these subjects will furnish something more than information; they will give a key to the philosophy of living.

### *Election of President James*

FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS after the resignation of President Rogers, a committee of the trustees searched for a new president of the university. Finally the name of Dr. Edmund Janes James was presented to the board of trustees, and by unanimous vote he was chosen president in 1902.

Professor James was greatly encouraged by the expressed ideals and plans of the new president, who worked hard, but without much success, for the development of graduate work.

In closing his annual report during the summer of 1904, President James reiterated former recommendations that provision should be made for a great graduate school, for a school of technology for the training of engineers, and for a college of commerce and industry for the preparation of men of business. While writing this recommendation he had under consideration an invitation to become president of the University of Illinois. His plans for the future of Northwestern were so far-reaching that he despaired of their accomplishment during his administration and

accepted the more promising proposal made by unanimous vote of the trustees of the University of Illinois.

In 1902 Professor James was elected president of the college section of the Illinois State Teachers Association. During 1903 he was visited by the resident regent of the Plattville, Wisconsin, State Normal School and was tendered the office of president of that school, from which Dr. McGregor had resigned. The honor, however, was declined.

In September 1903 the James family moved into their new home at 2127 Orrington Avenue, Evanston, which for many years was a harbor where students were always welcome to receive any help which the occupants of that home could give.

*Lectures at Johns Hopkins University*

LEAVE OF ABSENCE from the university was granted Professor James during May 1904 to permit him to give a course of six lectures on the subject "French-American Diplomacy, 1783-1801" before the history seminar of Johns Hopkins University.

On December 27, 1904, Dr. Thomas F. Holgate, dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Northwestern, was elected president of the university ad intrin. In 1905 James A. Patten was appointed chairman of a special committee of the trustees, which was to endeavor

to raise one million dollars, to be known as the Jubilee Memorial Fund. By June of the following year the required amount was pledged.



## C H A P T E R   I V

### *Varied Educational Activities*

I<sup>N</sup> 1905 Professor James was elected president of the Chicago History Teachers Association, made up of high school teachers, which he had assisted in organizing. Its primary purpose was to emphasize the introduction into the high schools of a program for teaching history which had been prepared by a special committee of seven representing the American Historical Association. The report of this committee was revolutionary in its effect upon the teaching of history throughout the United States.

Because of the wide influence of the report of this committee, the members of the American Historical Association, developed an interest in the teaching of history in the elementary schools. The result was the appointment of a committee of eight to consider such a program. Professor James was made chairman of this Committee. The course of study recommended after

three years of investigation was adopted by the American Historical Association.

In 1906 Professor James was appointed a member of the committee of eight of the American Political Science Association on "A Course of Study for the Secondary and Elementary Schools."

A commission of five members was appointed by the Illinois Library Board in 1907 to decide upon the selection of documents on Illinois history for publication. An appropriation had been made by the Illinois legislature for this purpose. Professor James served as a member of this commission. Volume eight of the series, published in 1912, contains the letters of George Rogers Clark, which he collected.

*Research on the American Revolution in the West*

IN 1908-9 PROFESSOR JAMES was granted a year's leave of absence from the university to engage in research on the American Revolution west of the Allegheny Mountains and to collect the letters of George Rogers Clark for publication in a volume in the Illinois State Historical Collections.

It was Professor and Mrs. James' plan to have their two sons, Maurice and Hubert, then fourteen and twelve years of age, acquire facility in French by the natural method. It was desirable, therefore, that during

Professor James' leave of absence from the university Mrs. James and the boys should go to France. As late as 1907 Professor James' salary was only three thousand dollars, and only the chairman of three other departments received as much as thirty three hundred dollars a year. But royalties which he had been receiving from the sale of his texts seemed promising enough to warrant an income adequate to meet the necessary expense of the venture and still provide for the regular monthly payments on their home.

For several months Professor James' time was given to research in the leading collection of documentary material on the history of the Middle West in the Draper Collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

While Professor James was in Madison, his close friend, Professor Turner, the leading authority on the history of the West, received and accepted an invitation to become professor of history at Harvard University.

### *Promotion of Alumni Clubs*

DURING THE EARLY PART of 1909 Professor James also devoted much of his time to calling on Northwestern alumni and to the organization of the first Northwestern clubs in various key cities west of the Mississippi River. When Glenn Frank (later president of the University of Wisconsin) became the first



Northwestern alumni secretary, he had marked success in the promotion of the plan adopted by Professor James in organizing alumni clubs.

*Presents Edward Spencer for Degree*

PROFESSOR JAMES returned to Evanston in time to be present at the 1909 commencement. The university exercises were held in the recently completed gymnasium, which had been erected with the gift of three hundred thousand dollars by James A. Patten, a university trustee. One of the noteworthy features of the occasion was the presentation of Edward Spencer, of the class of 1861, for the degree of bachelor of arts. Professor James had been asked by President Abram W. Harris to bring Spencer to the platform in a wheel chair to receive this honor. Spencer was unable to walk. He had never recovered from the physical shock received in his junior year as a result of his heroism on the occasion of the wreck of the steamer *Lady Elgin* in 1860.

A plaque at the entrance to the present gymnasium bears the following inscription:

To Edward Spencer, first Northwestern student life-saver, this tablet is erected by the class of 1898. At the wreck of the *Lady Elgin*, off Winnetka, September 8, 1860, Spencer swam through the heavy surf sixteen



## *Presents Edward Spencer for Degree*

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times, rescuing seventeen persons in all. In the delirium of exhaustion which followed, his oft-repeated question was: "Did I do my best?"

## *Writes Text for High Schools*

EARLY IN THE YEAR 1909 *American History; A Text for High Schools*, which had been written by Professor Sanford and Professor James, was published by Charles Scribner's Sons. In it the military phases of our history and the campaigns of Army and Navy were subordinated to accounts of victories of peace. Greater prominence than was usual in school texts was given to the advance of the frontier and to the growth and influence of the West. Particular care was taken to state the essential facts of European history necessary to the explanation of events in America. By means of marginal references and supplementary questions, the intimate relationship between American and European history and government was indicated, this correlation being one of the new and important features of the book. It was recommended by large numbers of teachers of history in high schools, normal schools, and colleges.

*European Trip*

IN FEBRUARY 1910, following a trip to Berlin and Leipzig, Professor James went to London to study documents bearing on English-American diplomacy, 1789-97. With a letter of introduction from his friend Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, widely known authority on American history, formerly of the faculty at the University of Chicago, and editor of the *American Historical Review*, Professor James was extended every courtesy by the directors of the British Public Record Office and the British Museum. Of interest to him was the spectacular parade and other ceremonials preceding the opening of Parliament and particularly a session of the House of Commons.

While he was a student at Johns Hopkins, Professor James had been introduced to James Bryce, author of *The American Commonwealth* and a former lecturer before the Hopkins history seminar. Assuming that Mr. Bryce might recall this incident, for he had been elected a member of the House of Commons, Professor James wrote him asking for a ticket of admission to one of the regular sessions. Mr. Bryce's reply, containing the ticket, stated he would meet Professor James in the House gallery for visitors at a time indicated. For a half hour Mr. Bryce explained the organization

of the House and the course of the debate then in progress.

In 1911 Professor James' article "French-American Diplomacy, 1795-97" was published in the *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association. At the Buffalo meeting of the Association he read a paper on "French Diplomacy and American Politics." Also in 1911 Professor James was elected a member of the first board of editors of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. In 1912 he became a trustee of the Illinois Historical Society, where he continued to serve until 1951, one year as vice-president and four years as president. In 1913 he was elected president of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society.

In 1911 Professor James was again extended an invitation to become president of Cornell College, but once more he declined because of his desire to continue in his chosen field of teaching and research.

### *George Rogers Clark Letters*

EARLY IN 1912 PROFESSOR JAMES published the volume containing the *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1791*, as Volume VIII of the *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Virginia Series, Volume III*. The letters and documents occupy 628 pages, and there is a historical introduction of 125 pages.

Since 1909 Professor James had given as much time as possible to the preparation of this volume and had collected the letters and documents bearing on the subject to be found in the Draper Collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society, in the Colonel Durrett Library of Louisville, in the Virginia State Library, and in the Library of Congress. Copies of documents were also obtained from the Canadian Archives at Toronto and from the British Museum.

Meanwhile, in 1912, on the request of Charles Scribner's Sons, Professor James completed a volume on *Contemporary History of the United States*. It became Volume VI of *The Illustrated History of the United States* by E. Benjamin Andrews.

### *The John Richard Lindgren Foundation*

IN 1912 and for many years thereafter Professor James acted as secretary and a trustee of the John Richard Lindgren Foundation, the income from which was to be devoted to the promotion of "international peace and Christian unity."

A plan adopted by the *Commission* provided prizes to be offered for the preparation of essays by high school students on "The Demand for International Peace." Large numbers of essays, coming from different sections of the country, were submitted for the prizes.

One of the projects of the Lindgren Foundation was the awarding of tuition scholarships to various foreign students at Northwestern.

From time to time Professor James received, or contributed to, historical books and articles written by other historians. On invitation of the editors he wrote twenty biographical articles on historical characters in *The Cyclopedia of American Government*, edited by Professor Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard and Professor Andrew C. McLaughlin of the University of Chicago.

In 1917 he was invited to become chairman of the department of history at the University of Iowa at an increase in salary, but his interests were at Northwestern and he declined the offer.

He was chosen by Mr. Patten, president of the university board of trustees, to present to the university two bronze statues, which were placed in front of the new gymnasium. In presenting the statue of the athlete, Professor James stated, "It is the portrayal of the students who has acquired that habit of determination in the face of difficulties which more than anything else makes a body of men powerful in their several spheres."



## CHAPTER V

### *The Graduate School*

THE most significant honor that can be conferred upon any university is to be admitted to membership in the Association of American Universities. No university may become a member of this Association without an invitation, following an examination by a special committee and after approval of the university's research and graduate work by the deans of the graduate schools of the universities comprising the Association. Whether or not a university has been invited to become a member of the Association of American Universities is not only an important factor from the standpoint of its standing as an educational institution, but it is also a consideration with various foundations and endowment funds in determining the qualifications of that university to receive financial support. Prior to 1917 Northwestern University had not been invited to become a member of the Association of American Universities.



Prior to 1910 a committee of three members of the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts had been in charge of the very small amount of graduate work in the university. President Rogers had attempted, but without much cooperation from the trustees, to extend graduate work. In a report to the trustees in 1904 President James had declared: "It is perfectly apparent to anyone who studies the drift of events in college and university life in this country that in another twenty-five years no institution will rank as a university which does not make large provision for graduate work. In fact, I am inclined to think that the outstanding characteristic of the true university that will mark it off from a mere group of professional schools will be found in the existence of a strong graduate school." In February 1910, the university council recommended organization of a board of graduate studies. Twenty-one members of the faculties of the several schools were appointed to this board to carry on graduate work. Professor Holgate, chairman of the department of mathematics and dean of the College of Liberal Arts, was chairman. In 1913 Professor Holgate stated in his report that his other administrative duties necessarily consumed such a large share of his time that he should no longer act as chairman of that committee. He recommended the appointment of Professor James as dean of the Graduate School. But instead of appointing a dean at that time, President Abram Harris appointed



## *The Graduate School*

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Professor James as chairman of the board of Graduate Studies, with duties substantially those of a dean of the School.

### *A Period of Depression*

THE YEAR 1913 was in a period of financial depression. For several years the university had had a recurring deficit in its budget. To add to the gloom, the number of men registering in the College of Liberal Arts had decreased, and the women students outnumbered the men. No office space was assigned to the Graduate School, and no money was allotted for its development. For some time no secretarial services were available, and Professor James wrote his letters in longhand. His duties as chairman of the department of history were not lessened, so his work as chairman of the board of Graduate Studies was added to the work that he was already doing in the university. The outlook for the growth of a graduate school was anything but promising.

But Professor James' belief in the necessity for a graduate school, if Northwestern was to become an outstanding university, was the driving incentive which induced him to accept the challenge.

*Graduate Standards Developed*

THE STANDARDS OF GRADUATE WORK were developed so rapidly and so noticeably that in October 1917 Professor James realized his dream of long standing. Northwestern University was invited to become a member of the Association of American Universities. Without previous notice, a committee of three members of the Association visited the Northwestern campus and carried on an extended examination, which included a scrutiny of all the minutes and records and other facts relating to the Graduate School. It also included an inquiry regarding the contributions to knowledge which each of the faculty personnel had made in his special field of research and an investigation of the general equipment of the university for carrying on graduate instruction. Thereafter the deans of the graduate schools in the twenty-three universities comprising the Association, by unanimous vote, invited Northwestern to become a member of the Association. By this action Northwestern graduates became entitled to the professional and academic recognition by state boards of education and in foreign countries which was accorded graduates of universities belonging to the Association.

Evidence of approval by the members of this Association served to stimulate the demand for a generally

advanced program on the part of Northwestern. In the autumn of 1917 a special committee of trustees was appointed "to make an extended survey of the university, its financial and educational departments." It was the recommendation of Professor James that part of the inquiry should be directed toward the development of research and teaching in the university, and a cooperative committee representing the faculties was appointed to make a study of research work at the university. These committees in their reports emphasized the necessity for developing opportunities for the faculty and students to engage in research. They also supported a long-standing belief and recommendation by Professor James of the necessity for the establishment of a Northwestern University Press. But when this report was submitted on April 13, 1918, trustees and faculties were forced to consider other pressing problems relating to the university and World War I.



## C H A P T E R V I

### *The War Years*

I<sub>N</sub> 1919 Professor James assisted Professor Walter Dill Scott in introducing the "rating scale" for the promotion of army officers. This plan, originated by Professor Scott and adopted by the Secretary of War, had two main aspects. First, it provided for the adjustment of drafted men to those occupations in which they could be most effective, as indicated by their previous experience. This involved the preparation of a card index of the whole Army which would show at a glance the branch of industry from which any drafted man had come. With such an index, the personnel of the Army was so classified that groups of men could be readily selected for various occupations. Second, it included a device through which officer material might be found and graded according to efficiency. This device disregarded the method formerly in use by the War Department, that of promotion according to seniority.

Some of the professional officers offered stout resistance to the introduction of the plan.

Rockford, Illinois, was one of the first camps visited by Professor James. There the commandant, Major General C. H. Martin, and his officers heartily cooperated in the introduction of the plan. Shortly after he arrived, Professor James wrote a personal letter to Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, urging him to come to that camp to address the men and their families on the Fourth of July. He noted that about fifty thousand people would be present and said, "In such a meeting you would be able to sense the spirit of the Middle West under conditions which could not be improved upon in any other place." His friendship with Secretary Baker had begun in their graduate student days at Johns Hopkins University. Secretary Baker acted upon the suggestion and, following the meeting, wrote Professor James, stating: "My visit was full of pleasure and profit to me. I knew that the spirit of the Middle West was all right, but I confess I was surprised at the fine enthusiasm I met."

Major General Martin wrote Professor James: "I feel that it is due principally to you that we have succeeded in this great patriotic accomplishment. I want to thank you. I think the coming of the Secretary will enthuse our boys and quicken their efforts as nothing else could."

*Overcomes Opposition*

PROFESSOR JAMES' EXPERIENCE at Camp Zachary Taylor, at Louisville, Kentucky, is an illustration of the problems he met in introducing this project in the various camps. When he went to the camp, at which there were five thousand five hundred selected men, he found the commanding officer, a Colonel Carter, courteous but unsympathetic to the project. On the first day, however, through arrangements made by Colonel Carter, Professor James met two assembled battalions, two on the next day, and so on continuing through the week. Before Professor James had gone through the second day, Colonel Carter had changed his attitude toward the work. Officers and enlisted men became interested. Professor James demonstrated to the men how the scale had been used in selecting them to come to the school and also showed them how it was being used in the school to rate them from week to week. Some of the commanding officers of the battalions became interested to the extent of taking two evenings on their own time to have the students rate one another. During the summer and early fall of 1918 Professor James visited twenty-one camps and was commended most highly by various officers for his assistance in working out a system which enabled the army to get the most out of its men in the fields for which they were best fitted.



*Armistice Day*

ARMISTICE DAY AT THE UNIVERSITY, as all over the country, was what Professor James described as "one grand and glorious string of thrills." With the shrill sounds of whistles and ringing of bells, university classes were dismissed. A spontaneous mass meeting of citizens and students was held in the gym, where President Holgate presided. After an address by Professor John A. Scott, Professor James introduced two French soldiers. They were among the number of exchange students who had come to Northwestern as part of the plan to bring foreign peoples into more friendly cooperation with the United States. One of these exchange students, Sergeant Francois Conti, had been in many important battles. He had been cited four times for bravery and wore the Croix de Guerre and three palms of honor. Private Pierre de Chavigny had been wounded at Verdun and wore a decoration showing that his regiment had been cited eight times for heroic deeds.

*Avenue of Elms*

IT WAS AT THE SUGGESTION OF DEAN JAMES that a plan was adopted for an avenue of elms to be planted



## *Avenue of Elms*

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on the North Campus—a tree for each life lost in the war, as a fitting memorial. In time, it was thought, the arching elms might frame a pathway resembling the famous Addison's Walk of Magdalen College, Oxford.



## CHAPTER VII

### *Lectures and Publications*

**T**HROUGHOUT his career, Professor James delivered many lectures and frequently made talks before historical societies and other organizations.

On March 19, 1921, he received a communication from the Honorable Bedrich Stepanek, Czechoslovak minister to the United States, requesting him to give a course of lectures on American history at the old University of Prague. It was in the United States at a meeting in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, that Thomas J. Masaryk had recently published to the world the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence.

When Professor James gave the lectures at Prague, it was somewhat of a surprise to him to have his audience each day stand at attention as he entered and likewise as he left the lecture room. Independence was the watchword. At one time, speaking of the origin of the American Declaration of Independence, Professor

James added, "I know how long you have waited for your independence." They all joined, to his surprise, in almost shouting "Three hundred years."

This experience was dramatically impressive of the fact that the yearning for freedom by people who have once experienced it cannot be obliterated, even after long periods of time.

Jan Masaryk, son of the president, accompanied Professor and Mrs. James on a sight-seeing trip for an entire day in the country out from Prague. On entering a small school in the country twenty-four miles from Prague, Professor and Mrs. James were greeted by the pupils' standing and singing "America" in somewhat broken English. The only decorations in the room were American and Czechoslovak flags on the wall above the teacher's desk and a portrait of Woodrow Wilson and one of President Masaryk to the right and left of the flags. As the guests left, the pupils sang their own national anthem.

*Writes and Talks on Czechoslovakia*

FOR THE OCTOBER 1922 ISSUE of *Century Magazine*, on invitation of Glenn Frank, its publisher, an article was written by Professor James under the title "The Yankee of Central Europe, Impressions of an American Professor in Prague." Dr. Stepanek wrote him: "I beg

to express to you the heartfelt thanks of the Czechoslovak legation for all your efforts in making the American people better acquainted with the Czechoslovak Republic."

Professor James was invited to return as a lecturer at Charles University and to visit two other universities which had been organized at Brno and Bratislava. He was, however, not able to accept the invitation.

On April 7, 1948, he was invited to give an address before the Federation of Czechoslovakia at a banquet in the LaSalle Hotel, Chicago. This occasion marked the six hundredth anniversary of Charles University. The subject chosen was "Fundamental Democratic Ideals in the Creation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia." The spirit of the audience on that occasion was very tense, because of Hitler's encroachments and because of the announcement of the tragic death of Jan Masaryk and the mortal illness of Eduard Benes. Both men were believed to have been victim of German intrigue.

*Publication of the Life of George Rogers Clark*

PROFESSOR JAMES' *Life of George Rogers Clark*, who conquered the Territory west of the Alleghenies during the Revolutionary War, was published in 1928 by the University of Chicago Press. That work is considered

by many historians to be the most authoritative history of our acquisition of what was known in revolutionary times as the Northwest Territory.

In his book he took the position, which he completely documented and proved to the satisfaction of most historians, that the American retention of the great Middle West and Northwest after the Revolutionary War was due to George Rogers Clark's military control. He dispelled the former contention that the retaining of that territory by the newly formed American republic was due to Lord Shelburne's generosity and farsighted concern for Anglo-American friendship.

The success of the volume may be judged from the reviews by outstanding authorities. Carl Russell Fish, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, wrote in the *New York Nation*:

The name of George Rogers Clark is familiar to every American. It is connected with the capture of Kaskaskia and Vincennes, and with heroism; but there most people's information ends. Among a much smaller circle it invokes controversy. Did he win the Northwest for the United States? Was he skillful or lucky? Are his writings reliable or the romantic drivelings of old age? Roosevelt had little use for him; Thwaites defended him. Professor James has made Clark and these controversies his study for twenty years. He has drawn upon the libraries of all the United States, of France,

## *Publication of the Life of George Rogers Clark*

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Canada, England, and Spain. The result is the emergence of a figure back of the historical events, unusual, picturesque, but understandable, and a presentation of the evidence as to the controversies which either settles them or leaves them in a suspense that is likely to prove permanent.

Professor James seems to the reviewer definitely to establish the authenticity of Clark's *Memoir* as against the criticisms of Roosevelt. He demolishes the tale of Clark's irreconcilable bitterness against the United States, as well as that of his complete demoralization by dissipation.

The book constitutes, in fact, an admirable survey of the whole Revolution in the West.

William E. Dodd, professor of American History at the University of Chicago, wrote in the *Chicago Daily News*:

There was need for a new study. And we have it. The book before us is exhaustive; it is just and sympathetic, without undue expressions of approval—such a biography as one might always wish to have at hand for the facts and their meanings. But I must not fail to say that it is also very much of a history of the Middle West.

In 1951 John D. Barnhart, chairman of the Depart-



ment of history of Indiana University, wrote to Professor James:

I have secured and edited the journal of Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton of Detroit which he kept of his expedition to Vincennes.

I should like to have the privilege of dedicating this volume to you as a scholar, teacher, and friend.

In my introduction I speak of your *Life of George Rogers Clark* as the best and most scholarly biography of George Rogers Clark.

*Life of Oliver Pollock*

DURING THE YEARS THAT PROFESSOR JAMES had given to research on the life of George Rogers Clark, he discovered the name, otherwise almost unknown, of Oliver Pollock. No account either of his life or of his influence during the American Revolution had been given in our histories. In the Clark volume, Professor James referred to Pollock as the financier of the Revolution in the West, without whose aid Clark would not have succeeded. Following the publication of the Clark biography, Professor James continued research on the life of Pollock, and published a number of special studies in various historical publications, including the *Irish Quarterly Review*, published in



Dublin. After ten years devoted to that subject he published the book *Oliver Pollock, Life and Times of an Unknown Patriot*.

Clarence E. Carter, an authority on Midwestern history, wrote in the *American Historical Review* for July 1938:

In this book Professor James records for the first time the complete history of financial aid rendered by Oliver Pollock in the cause of American independence. The book is more than a biography of Pollock. It is a veritable history of the Mississippi Valley and the West Florida area during the periods of the American Revolution and the Confederation, at once informative, well organized, excellently written, and thoroughly documented.

No further information on Oliver Pollock, other than that discovered by Professor James, has appeared. Professor James could locate no member of Pollock's family. The former town of Pinckneyville, Mississippi, where Pollock lived during his last years, no longer exists. But through the efforts and research of Professor James one more name must now be added to the list of leaders who, by sacrifice of self, made possible American independence. It is almost certain that, without the aid of Oliver Pollock, the Mississippi Valley would not have been taken from the British and

would not have become a part of the new United States at the close of the Revolutionary War.

### *The Purchase of Alaska*

IN THE SPRING OF 1867 Secretary of State William H. Seward negotiated a treaty with Russia providing for the purchase of Alaska by the United States for \$7,200,000. When the treaty came before the United States Senate for approval or disapproval, Seward was severely criticized and ridiculed by speakers in Congress and in the newspapers, especially in the *New York Tribune* by Horace Greeley, its celebrated editor. The proposed purchase was referred to as Seward's Folly. Alaska was referred to as Seward's Icebox and as a dreary waste of glaciers, icebergs, polar bears, and walruses.

The adverse tide in the Senate was turned in favor of ratification of the treaty by a three-hour speech made on April 9, 1867, by Charles Sumner, United States senator from Massachusetts, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. His speech, depicting the wealth and importance of Alaska, has been referred to as "a monument of comprehensive research."

These facts are, of course, well known, but what is little known is the role that two Northwestern University men, Henry Bannister and Robert Kennicott,

had played in the purchase by furnishing information to Senator Sumner. Indeed, in his speech Senator Sumner acknowledged that the facts used in its preparation came largely from Bannister and Kennicott.

Professor James devoted three years to research into the activities of those two men, both explorers, who had been connected with Northwestern University. Kennicott had been a member of the faculty and founder and curator of the university's Museum of Natural History. Bannister, a resident of Northfield, Illinois, had been a student at the university, graduating from the College of Liberal Arts in 1863. He later became the second curator of the Museum of Natural History. Professor James' discoveries were made possible largely through access to the journal kept by Kennicott during his explorations and the diary kept by Bannister during his explorations of 1865-66.

In 1865 Kennicott accepted the office of chief of explorations of Russian America on an expedition planned by the Western Union Telegraph Company to establish communication between America and Europe by constructing a telegraph line from Puget Sound through British territory across the Bering Strait and Siberia to the mouth of the Amur River, where it was to be joined by a line built by the Russian government. This would, when completed, give telegraphic communication between America and Europe. The company was spurred on to the undertaking by the

failure of three attempts to join the continents by an Atlantic cable. Scientific explorations connected with the Western Union project were to be conducted by Kennicott and six assistants from the Smithsonian Institution. Bannister was selected as one of this group. It was Bannister's diary that gave an account of the expedition. That diary was to become the chief source of the information on the resources of this territory presented to the United States Senate in 1867.

After the explorations, during which Kennicott died, Bannister wrote: "I went to Washington, and the treaty with Russia ceding the Russian Territory was before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. I was the only person in Washington who could give an account of conditions there from personal observation." Bannister stated that he conferred with Senator Sumner from time to time while the latter was preparing his speech. He also conferred with Secretary Seward and appeared before the Committee, giving information on Alaska.

Bannister's diary and the above facts were for many years unknown to historians. In 1939, however, Professor James conferred with Ruth Bannister, daughter of Henry Bannister, about any important papers she might have. In the attic of her home she discovered the diary of her father, and at the request of Professor James these five handwritten volumes as well as a number of letters from the two explorers were pre-

sented to the Northwestern University Archives by Miss Bannister. That diary was the source of much of the material used by Professor James in publishing *The First Scientific Exploration of Russia-America and the Purchase of Alaska*. This book became the first volume of the *Northwestern University Studies in the Social Sciences*.

A review of the book in the *Minnesota Historical Society Quarterly* stated, "Beside the diary there is a convincing account of the part played by these two young men in bringing about the purchase of Alaska by the United States."

On July 27, 1866, the world was startled by the announcement of the completion of the trans-Atlantic cable under the direction of Cyrus W. Field. In view of this development, the plan to construct the overland telegraph line by the Western Union Telegraph Company was abandoned.

Ernest Gruening, governor of Alaska, upon reading Professor James' book, wrote, "It fills what had hitherto been a gap in the history of Alaska, the relation between the Western Union Telegraph expedition and the purchase of Alaska."

Professor James' book destroyed the impression previously held by various historians that Secretary Seward was influenced solely by political motives in bringing about the purchase of Alaska. Professor James disclosed that Secretary Seward was well informed of

the immense resources and importance of Alaska and for that reason negotiated its purchase.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *Retirement*

IN 1931 Professor James retired as dean of the Graduate School. In an article in the *Northwestern Alumni News* Dr. O. F. Long, professor of Latin at Northwestern University, wrote: "Professor James was, from the first, in charge of the destiny of the Graduate School. . . . The high standards of the Graduate School helped largely in giving Northwestern coveted membership in the American and Canadian institution known as the Association of American Universities. Toward this recognition Dean James worked long and hard." In his president's report for 1931 President Walter Dill Scott stated, "The present high position of the Graduate School is due to Dean James' intelligent and sympathetic administration."

During Professor James' administration the number of graduate students increased from 97 to 685. He

also effected a comparable increase in the academic standards of the school. It was his policy each year to send a personal letter to the alumni of the school, and his files were filled with quantities of letters from these former graduate students—presidents of universities, chairmen of departments of history, teachers, physicians, lawyers, ministers, editors—acknowledging their deep gratitude for the help and inspiration received from him.

What Professor James accomplished as dean of the Graduate School was against great odds. When he became dean in 1913, the country was in a period of financial depression. The resultant lack of funds, suitable equipment, and sufficient space made his work difficult. What he accomplished was due in large measure to his spirit of devotion to the work, which was imparted to his assistants and others in the school.

*Retires as Professor of History*

ON FRIDAY, MAY 10, 1935, Professor James retired as professor of history at Northwestern University, and on this occasion he received sheaves of letters from all over the world. They came from university and college presidents, from professors of history, from leaders in the professions and in business, expressing



appreciation for the personal inspiration and help he had given to them.

William Hard, the distinguished journalist, wrote:

Professor James gave me the best preparation I had for trying to write the journalistic history of the events of today. I owe him more than it is possible for me to express. He gave me a start toward trying to be comprehensive and painstaking and fair. He gave me a start toward trying to get into the insides of things. He did this both by his instructional methods and by his personality. I shall always remain his debtor and a debtor in default.

### *The University Archives*

PRIOR TO THE RETIREMENT OF Professor James in 1935, one of his colleagues in the history department, Dr. Arthur W. Wilde, had edited the four-volume *Northwestern University; A History, 1855-1905*. Professor James wrote the chapter in this volume on the founders of the university and also advised as to the selection of the material and writers for other chapters. Unfortunately the publishers insisted that the work should be completed within a year, so that research on some of the subjects was quite limited. The fact was also emphasized to Professor James that

much documentary material was not available, and as a result he was strongly impressed with the necessity for two steps:

1. He recommended to President Scott that a room be set aside to be known as the University Historical Archives. All available material relating to the history of the university and its departments should be collected before it was destroyed, and it should be indexed and catalogued.

2. He further recommended that a definitive history of the university should be prepared.

Following these recommendations, Professor James was appointed chairman of a committee on archives and history. He soon found that much of the material on hand which might find a place in the university archives had found a resting place in the vault of the library and that other documents were to be found in different places in the library stacks. In earlier years, much of the material had been boxed up in the Lunt Library basement. Through the years no effort had been made to classify it.

Upon a visit to the Columbia University Archives, Professor James found that the custodian was able to give him information regarding that university from a wealth of classified material kept under his immediate direction. He was also impressed with the wealth of historical material in the archives of Harvard

University and with the careful manner in which it had been indexed and catalogued.

Professor James adopted various methods of procuring material for the university archives:

1. He requested department heads, particularly those who had been at the university for a long period of time, to collect any material available and also to prepare statements from their recollection of essential facts and personalities in the development of their departments.

2. He appealed to the alumni, particularly the older alumni, for help in developing the archives of the university.

3. He arranged for the publication of a historical catalogue of Northwestern University, modeling it on that of Brown University.

4. From university buildings he collected many boxes of material which might otherwise have been lost or destroyed.

5. In 1944, through Ralph Ball of the university legal department, he found that there were many old boxes of correspondence which were about to be destroyed. These were removed from among the heating pipes, cleaned, and transferred to a storeroom in Deering Library. The boxes contained many items which Professor James considered of substantial value for the archives.

In the eleven years from 1935 to 1946 Professor James received great assistance from Florence Stewart and also Eleanore Lewis in the development and cataloging of items placed in the archives.

Professor James endeavored to arrange for the publication of a history of each of the departments. Dean John H. Wigmore agreed and started to write the history of the law school. This effort, however, was terminated by his death.

At the suggestion of Vice-president Harry Wells, Mrs. Edson Fowler wrote a history of the School of Domestic Arts and Science, formerly of Chicago, which had become a part of Northwestern University. Mrs. Fowler made substantial use of the documents deposited in the archives in preparing the history.

The archives department established by Professor James has attracted much interest and been visited and studied by representatives of other universities. Dr. Henry L. Seaver of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wrote to Professor James, "I have taken a good many notes to be considered in connection with our plans to develop an Archives Division."

Visitors to the archives department have been impressed with the fact that the function of the archives is not alone to preserve historical data relating to the history of Northwestern University but to assist in its use.

*Preparation of "History of Northwestern  
University, 1851-1940"*

DURING THE ELEVEN YEARS FROM 1935 TO 1946, when Professor James was developing the archives department, he also spent a great deal of time writing his "History of Northwestern University, 1851-1940," amounting in all to about 1,947 typewritten pages.

This work was never published, but for research purposes it is a monumental record of the history of the university to 1940. Dr. John W. Spargo, professor of English and editor of university publications, who read the manuscript, wrote: "The work is a model as it stands, solidly supported as it is by historical facts. It is at once definitely authoritative and urbanely interesting. It is genuinely moving to anyone who sets any real value upon the intellectual history of the Middle West."

Professor James was proud of the noteworthy achievements of Northwestern's faculty. He was proud of its great presidents and thought that Henry Wade Rogers, Walter Dill Scott, and J. Roscoe Miller should be classed among the most outstanding university presidents of his time. He also thought that Vice President Harry L. Wells had made an unusual contribution to the financial stability and growth of the university.

*Commemorates University Lifesaving Crew*

IN 1872 THE UNITED STATES government presented a lifesaving boat to Northwestern University, to be manned by volunteer students. For six years there was no building in which to house the boat. In 1876 the Northwestern Lifesaving Station was erected where Fisk Hall now stands. Later, when Fisk Hall was built, the station was moved closer to Lake Michigan. In 1880 Laurence O. Lawson was appointed as a full-time superintendent in charge of the student members of the crew. Shortly thereafter a report to the government stated that this crew, the only one composed of students under direction of the government, was the best organized and drilled on Lake Michigan.

Included in its record were the rescues from the wrecks of the *Princeton*, *Ballantine*, and *Iron-ton* on the Winnetka shore on a night of fog and heavy sea on October 22, 1899, and from the wreck on Thanksgiving morning of that year, in a fierce blizzard with the temperature nine degrees below zero, of the steamer *Calumet*, which went ashore off Highland Park. The crew had also, in 1895, during a blinding snowstorm and high sea, assisted in the rescue of thirty-six sailors from the *J. Emory Owen* and her consorts, the *Nicholson* and *Michigan*, stranded off the Glencoe shore. From 1876 to 1915 it is recorded





Dedication of the bronze plaque commemorating the heroism of Northwestern University lifesaving crews, June 14, 1947. Professor James, standing at the left of the monument, conceived the idea of the memorial, secured the funds to pay for it, and obtained the granite boulder on which it is mounted.





that, through the skill and heroism of the lifesaving crews, more than four hundred lives were saved from wrecked vessels. In 1916 the U.S. Coast Guard took charge, with a crew able to devote its entire time to the service. In 1931 the Coast Guard station on the campus was removed to the present location at Wilmette Harbor.

With these facts in mind, in 1947 Professor James petitioned President Franklin B. Snyder, for permission to place a fitting memorial on the campus in honor of the students who had made up the personnel of the university lifesaving crews. Shortly thereafter Professor James was advised that the trustees had approved his request, but no money was appropriated.

Professor James secured from an anonymous person the promise of funds sufficient to establish a proper memorial. The giver was later discovered to be Robert N. Holt, a prominent Chicago lawyer who had been a member of the crew in his student days at Northwestern. Professor James procured a large granite boulder from down state on which a bronze plaque was placed. The memorial is located close to the old lifesaving station at the southeast corner of the campus.

Professor James also caused a large rock to be brought to the campus to mark the place where Theodore Roosevelt, as President of the United States, gave a memorable address in 1903.

*Northwestern's Centennial Year, 1951*

PRIOR TO 1951, Northwestern made extended plans for its centennial in that year. The student committee in charge of the *Syllabus* for 1951 planned, as a special feature, a pictorial history of the university of some two hundred pages. Faculty, students, and alumni prepared this pictorial history almost exclusively from the manuscript of the history of the university which Professor James had previously prepared. Professor James, it should be noted, also contributed a substantial amount of work to the project, making a condensation of his earlier work, providing new material, and making it all accurate in detail.

## C H A P T E R   I X

### *Religion*

**A**CCORDING to the discipline of the Methodist Church no person, no paper, no organization has the authority to speak officially for the Methodist Church except the General Conference.

The pronouncements of the bishops of the Methodist Church on economic, political, and social questions are not the last word. Only what the General Conference pronounces on such questions is ultimately official to its ministers dealing with congregations throughout the country. Prior to Professor James' time there were no lay or business and professional delegates to the annual conferences of the Methodist Church. The Rock River Conference, one of the strongest, had much to do with amending the constitution of the Church to create official lay delegates to the annual conferences. Professor James had great influence in causing the Rock River Conference to take a prominent

part in that movement, and was one of the strongest individual powers leading to that important change of policy.

For many years Professor James was a lay delegate to the annual conference of the Rock River Conference. Also in 1924 he was elected a delegate to the General Conference of the church. Because of his recognized knowledge of historical precedents and because of his poise, stability, judgment, and knowledge of human nature as well as his pleasing personality, he for many years had great influence in shaping the policies and the thinking of the church and of its leaders. This influence in turn was reflected upon the thinking of the congregations. The *Annual Journal* and *Year Book* of the sessions of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Church have many references showing the great effect which he had upon the deliberations and the actions of that conference over the years.

### *World Peace Commission*

IN 1928 PROFESSOR JAMES was elected one of seven members of the World Peace Commission authorized that year by the General Conference of the Methodist Church. This election was directly related to his interest in creating a peace committee in each Methodist

church. He believed that peace meant more than just the absence of war; he viewed peace as the presence of affirmative and constructive forces resulting in the release of man's creative energies. His knowledge of the development of democratic government caused him to believe that the most desirable results can be achieved only through the united thinking and efforts of the best minds in the country. It was his belief that the best minds in each individual congregation should be exercised and brought to bear on those ideas and actions which would best bring about peace as he visualized it.

*Dr. Tittle Comes to Evanston*

IN 1919 A COMMITTEE of the board of trustees of the First Methodist Church of Evanston was appointed to visit Columbus, Ohio, where Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle was pastor of the Broad Street Methodist Church, to ascertain whether he should be invited to become the minister of the First Methodist Church of Evanston. The committee consisted of James E. Oates, Edwin Mills, William A. Dyche, and Professor James. Mr. Dyche made this proposal to the committee: "Oates, you were engaged in Y.M.C.A. work. See whether his Christian views are orthodox. Mills, you are with the Steel Company. Ascertain if his statements

on economic questions are satisfactory. James, you test his historical statements, and I will see if he is able to keep me awake for forty-five minutes." Mr. Dyche was kept wide awake, all were deeply impressed for forty-five minutes, and Dr. Tittle became the pastor of the First Methodist Church of Evanston.

Dr. Tittle's was one of the noted voices of the Protestant faith and was considered by many to be the greatest preacher of his time. He substantially influenced the thought of Protestant churches and their preachers and through them the millions of people to whom they spoke. Although Dr. Tittle never spoke above a conversational tone, few men have been able to express their ideas with his clarity, precision, and persuasive force. Attendance at church conferences was substantially greater when it was known that Dr. Tittle was to speak.

### *Association with Dr. Tittle*

FOR THIRTY YEARS PROFESSOR JAMES was a close friend and associate of Dr. Tittle as the "Lay assistant to the pastor." For years they were delegates to Methodist conferences, and each had great confidence in the other, although their procedures were in some respects different.

Dr. Tittle was an idealist who aimed at the ultimate



of human and moral perfection. Professor James' study of history caused him to believe that human progress had resulted slowly from the efforts of those who have carried the human race up a step at a time. He believed in spending his efforts toward striving for the next step, instead of a distant and what seemed to him to be—no matter how desirable—a presently unrealizable ideal. He believed that ideals are like the stars: We cannot reach them, but they light our way.

Neither of these two great men changed the basic principles and convictions of the other, nor did they try. But their association and friendship throughout the years meant a great deal to both of them.

Shortly before Professor James' retirement in 1935, Dr. Tittle wrote to him as follows:

As you approach the end of your last year of active service through Northwestern University, I crave the privilege of expressing my own appreciation of what you have done and been.

Through many students I have learned of the informing and fascinating way in which you have treated American history. And I know from personal observation that your influence as a man has been even more stimulating and helpful than your service as a teacher, great though that has been.

During many years you have persistently and ably served great causes. You have made yourself one of the

most distinguished laymen of a great church. In a time of religious doubt and indifference you have definitely stood for a religious conception of life. So that, as it was said of Gladstone, of you also it may be said, "He helped to keep the soul of a nation alive."

My own indebtedness to you is very great, and please believe me when I say that I thank you with all my heart.

Professor James had an equally high opinion of, and affection for, Dr. Tittle. Writing of the services Professor James performed for the church, Dr. Horace G. Smith, president of Garrett Biblical Institute and one of his former students at Northwestern, wrote:

The abounding vitality of this man cannot be consumed even in the dual task of teacher and research scholar. He takes time to be one of the leading laymen of First Church, Evanston. Throughout the years he has been faithful to his leadership—not as a position of honor but as a trust to duty. He is a leader because so many others are ready to follow in the way he feels the church should move.

*Ninetieth Anniversary of the Founding of the First Methodist Church*

ON NOVEMBER 21, 1944, the ninetieth anniversary



of the founding of the First Methodist Church, Evanston, was celebrated by a community banquet in great hall of that church. Dr. Tittle served as presiding chairman. Some time before this event Professor James had been assigned the task of writing the important phases of the history of the church from the date of its founding in 1854 to the arrival of Dr. Tittle as minister on December 18, 1918. At the anniversary meeting Professor James gave the main address on the topic "From Log Schoolhouse to Church Spire." His task was rather difficult because of the loss of many important documents through the years. The address, which was later published as *A History of the First Methodist Church*, stressed the interrelation of the early growth of the church with the development of Evanston, Northwestern University, and Garrett Biblical Institute.

### *Crusade Scholarships*

IN 1941 PROFESSOR JAMES was appointed a member of the Committee of Fifteen and in 1944, at the close of World War II, appointed a member of the Committee of Twenty-one on the Methodist Church program for reconstruction in India, China, Europe, and South America.

At a joint session of this committee in the LaSalle

Hotel, Chicago, twenty-five million dollars was agreed upon as the minimum goal to be reached in carrying out a program which was to be known as the Crusade for Christ. One feature of the plan promoted and strongly pressed by Professor James became known as the provision for "Crusade scholarships." The report of the secretary, James K. Mathews, states:

To Dean James Alton James of Northwestern University belongs the credit of recommending a program for scholarships for foreign students from Crusade funds. . . . A million seventy-five thousand dollars was finally set aside for this purpose. . . . This was the first church-wide program of scholarship aid for Methodists outside the United States.

Bishop J. Ralph Magee, in a personal letter to Professor James, wrote:

Your service to and through the Methodist Church is beyond calculation. Among the greatest [services] was the battle you fought to include foreign scholarships in the Crusade for Christ. Its results are so vast that no one can begin to calculate what it does and will increasingly mean to the world. I was present when you insisted this be done.

At a meeting of the secretaries and bishops it was

determined that graduate students from China should be given preference in the allocation of the Crusade scholarships. A statement was made at the time (prophetic as to later actual conditions) that "China undoubtedly will be the leader among the nations of continental Asia, perhaps of the entire hemisphere. . . . Within the next few years China's direction will be determined for generations to come."

In the ten-year period following the program's inauguration, Crusade scholarships were awarded to 850 foreign students, and more than \$2,400,000 was spent. The Crusade scholars attended 100 American colleges and universities. While most of them were Methodists, over 50 scholarships were awarded to candidates from other denominations. The recipients of these scholarships later became preachers, professors in seminaries, principals of schools, presidents of colleges, superintendents of hospitals, and distinguished doctors in their own countries; but they became something more as well—influential emissaries of good will toward the United States.

*International Christian University of Japan*

TO THE JAPANESE PEOPLE World War II brought loss of confidence in their war-time leaders, but they learned that their former enemy, the United States,

under the leadership of General MacArthur, was attempting to assist in the recovery and reconstruction of their country.

In 1948 churches of this country were invited to join in the incorporation of a Japanese Christian University Foundation and to make contributions to this end. The Japanese people contributed the money for the purchase of a site, 95 per cent of the donors being non-Christian, and Hachiro Yuasa was elected president of the university. An initial gift of \$1,100,000 was made by the various denominational boards, and the Foundation proceeded with a campaign to raise an additional \$9,000,000 in the United States, Canada, and Japan. Working on committees in Japan were presidents of banks and of chambers of commerce and other prominent Japanese citizens. The former emperor and his household were among the contributors, and thousands of gifts were secured by house-to-house canvass. The people of Japan were tremendously impressed by the prospect of an important university in their country.

The governor of the Bank of Japan, who was chairman of the campaign in that country, stated: "I am not a Christian. However, I have come to the conclusion that nothing but a Christian philosophy underlying Japanese democracy will ever put us through."

General MacArthur said this of the Foundation: "Its high purpose is entitled to every man's support.

With the advance of Communism, a Christian democratic Japan would become the brightest hope in Asia today."

Professor James contributed substantially to the promotion of this enterprise in the United States. President Yuasa and two representatives of the Foundation from New York came to Chicago and interviewed him to solicit his support. Professor James agreed to give the matter his wholehearted effort, provided major emphasis would be placed on the promotion of graduate instruction. This, he was assured, was the purpose. Thereafter for many weeks Professor James accompanied the representatives of the Foundation in making calls, and also held many luncheon and dinner meetings for invited guests, at which plans for the university were presented.

### *Helps Establish Library*

THE JAPANESE government stipulated that a charter for the university would be granted only on condition that twenty thousand volumes, one half of them in English and one half in Japanese, would first be secured for the proposed library. Professor James contributed his entire library and was instrumental in causing other volumes to be contributed to make up the ten thousand American volumes required. His

library contained hundreds of volumes, many covering the history of the United States and written by the most outstanding historians. It was probably as choice and complete a private collection of volumes on the history of the Middle West as could be found in the country. It has given Japanese scholars an excellent opportunity to acquaint themselves with all phases of the history of the United States and its institutions.

In 1958 Mitsuko Saito, a graduate of a Japanese college, received her master's degree from the School of Speech at Northwestern University. The International Christian University desired very much to secure her services for particular work but had no funds to do so. With assistance from several others, Professor James procured contributions sufficient to pay her salary for the first year and a half of her teaching at the university, after which the university was able to carry her salary.

*Delegate at the Lausanne Council of  
Protestant Churches*

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS Professor James exercised great influence on the attempt to unify, and bring about more mutual understanding among, the various faiths. During August 1927 the First World Council of the Protestant Churches on Faith and Order met at



Lausanne, Switzerland. Professor James was appointed a delegate to this conference. Sir Austin Chamberlain, M. Aristide Briand, who usually had Paul-Boncour and Louis Loucheur on either side of him, and other internationally known persons, were also delegates to this conference.

*Delegate to the Oxford World  
Conference of Churches*

PROFESSOR JAMES AND DR. TITTLE were appointed by the Council of Methodist Bishops to represent the Chicago area at the Oxford Conference of the World Council of Protestant Churches, which was to meet in Oxford, England, ten days in August 1937. The World Council of Churches on Faith and Order was to meet in Edinburgh at the close of the Oxford Conference. To that meeting Dr. James had likewise been appointed a delegate.

Before leaving he spent a number of hours in the Chicago studio of the artist William T. Welsh, as the subject for a portrait which was presented to Northwestern University by the Alumni Association.

There were four hundred delegates to the Oxford Conference, representing one hundred denominations of Protestant churches from forty-five nations.

Professor James had been much impressed by, and



called attention to, a statement of General Pershing in 1920: "The world does not seem to learn from experience. It would appear that the lessons of the last six years would be enough to convince everybody of the danger of nations striding up and down the earth armed to the teeth."

Professor James was convinced that the deliberations and actions of a conference composed of religious leaders from many nations could have much influence in creating a demand for peace from the people of those nations.

The Oxford report made clear that its primary objective was to assist in the creation of a world society of peaceful nations dependent not simply on political machinery but on what James Bryce declared to be "the one secure foundation for international peace, the extension throughout the world of the principles proclaimed by Jesus Christ." Professor James stated that the appeal for this ideal had been well defined by President Charles Seymour of Yale University in an address to his faculty when he stressed the view that, in its founding, Yale was dedicated to the training of spiritual leaders. "We betray our trust," he declared, "if we fail to explore the various ways in which the youth which come to us may learn to appreciate spiritual values, in the example of our lives or through the cogency of our philosophical arguments. The simple and direct way is through the

maintenance and upbuilding of the Christian religion as a part of university life."

### *Edinburgh Conference*

THE FAITH AND ORDER CONFERENCE held in Edinburgh following the Oxford Conference was associated with the Lausanne Conference. The first of the fundamental principles adopted at Lausanne and reiterated at Edinburgh declared, "The main work is to draw churches out of isolation into conferences in which none is to be asked to be disloyal or to compromise its convictions, but to seek to explain them to others while seeking to understand their points of view."

While he was in Great Britain, Professor James was impressed by various editorials and articles in leading newspapers, contributed by men prominent in business and education, deprecating the lack of knowledge of American history on the part of Englishmen, even graduates of the leading universities. An editorial in the *London Times*, entitled "Exploring America," advocated the inclusion of American history in the curriculum of the schools, stating that "the lack of knowledge of the subject, which may mean a lack of sympathy, needs to be remedied in such a way that the average well-educated man shall not be limited to the Revolution, the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln."



## C H A P T E R X

### *Church Unification*

**S**HORTLY after his return to Evanston in October 1937, Professor James worked with the ministers of Evanston churches in organizing the Evanston Council of Churches. Its purpose was to reproduce in the Evanston Churches portions of the programs of the two world conferences in Oxford and Edinburgh.

Professor James was also present at the first meeting in the Union League Club of Chicago of a group to form a similar organization in Chicago. He was, however, unable to become a member of the active committee in charge of the Chicago movement because of the immediate demands on his time made in connection with Methodist Church unification.

#### *Methodist Church Unification*

FOR SOME YEARS PROFESSOR JAMES had been an  
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active advocate of the union of the three branches of the Methodist Church in the United States. He was a member of the Unification Commission and spent much time going through the mass of literature prepared by special committees connected with the whole plan of unification. He wrote, "It seems to me that we shall accomplish not alone unification of the churches, but we shall make very great progress toward the obliteration of sectionalism in this country, for which we have waited all too long."

Following many meetings of the executive committee, of which Professor James was a member, and of the Commission on Interdenominational Relations and Church Union, composed of representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, the Uniting Conference met in the municipal auditorium of Kansas City, Missouri, April 28, 1939.

After long sessions of debate in committees and on the floor of the conference, lasting nearly a month, the motion was passed with an almost unanimous vote that the Methodist Church be a united, world-wide organization composed of seven and a half million persons. The good effect of this action was to be demonstrated in the development of the influence of a united Methodist Church.

Professor James was a strong influence in ironing out and compromising the differences blocking this

union of all the Methodist churches. He was named as a member of the new Commission on World Service and Finance, was entrusted with the duty of allocating funds to the several boards, and was designated as a member of the executive committee. His diplomacy and good judgment on this committee were extremely important in helping to settle and dissolve antagonism and jealousies between the northern and southern divisions of the church, particularly in connection with the allocation of funds.

*World Council of Churches*

IN THE *Northwestern Alumni News* for April 1954, there appeared the following statement by President J. Roscoe Miller of Northwestern University:

The second Assembly of the World Council of Churches is certain to be one of the most important events of our times. As the site of this great gathering of leading Protestant and Orthodox clergy and laymen, Northwestern will be host to men and women throughout the world.

They will of course represent a variety of viewpoints—religious, political, and economic. But as with all meetings undertaken in good faith by those who differ in their opinions, it will be the purpose of the council's

deliberation to help bridge, or at least to understand more clearly, the barriers which presently separate men from men—even though all be one in the sight of God.

Despite the fact that the University will have no role in these discussions, we trust that the delegates will find here a congenial atmosphere for their deliberations as we join them in their prayers that their noble efforts will meet with understanding and success.

Dr. Paul G. Macy of the Committee of 100, which promoted the assembly, wrote:

Late this summer, Northwestern will be host to the greatest religious conference ever to be held in the United States—the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches. From August 15 to 31, the University campus will be the temporary focal point of a movement which has been judged the most important in the field of religion for the past four centuries.

Professor James initiated the movement and played a major part in bringing the World Council of Churches to Evanston, with Northwestern University as host.

After the Edinburgh and Oxford conferences of 1937, to which Dr. Tittle and Professor James were



delegates, Archbishop William Temple of York, England, later Archbishop of Canterbury, and other leaders decided to coordinate their activities through the plan for a Uniting Council. It was an epochal event, therefore, when for the first time in history at Amsterdam, Holland, August 22 to September 4, 1948, the official representatives in an assembly of one hundred fifty denominations (Protestant, Old Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox) established a permanent organization for cooperation and possible unity to be known as the World Council of Churches. The term *ecumenical* (world-wide), applied to the movement, is used to describe this trend toward Christian unity. At Amsterdam it was made clear that the purpose of the World Council of Churches was to promote a unity consistent with the greatest fellowship of churches, not a "super church." The council existed to serve its member churches and do for them what would be impossible in separation.

Following the Amsterdam Assembly, the Provisional Committee decided that the second meeting of the World Council would be held in the United States in 1954. A location for the Assembly was to be determined by a committee of five members, of which Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of New York City was chairman and Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, American secretary of the World Council, was secretary.

When it was learned that the Assembly was to be

held in some city with a university serving as host, invitations were received by the committee from thirteen universities.

Professor James conceived the idea of an invitation from Northwestern University and the city of Evanston. He presented the idea to Dr. Tittle, a trustee of the university, who was enthusiastic in his support of the proposal. Dr. James F. McLeod, university chaplain, was equally favorable and accompanied Professor James to an interview with President J. Roscoe Miller, who at once agreed to cooperate in the plan. The wholehearted support of Harry L. Wells, vice-president of the university, was also a large factor in the success of the movement.

A big obstacle was the fact there was no auditorium large enough to house the people attending the sessions of the Council. The question of providing seats for large audiences had always been a real problem for the university, especially for commencement exercises. If the weather permitted, Deering Meadow was used, but it had been necessary on other occasions to provide for the service in Cahn Hall, seating 1,400, and in several Evanston churches. Fortunately this problem was met by the proposal of Foster G. McGaw, university trustee and a member of the Presbyterian Church, to contribute \$400,000 for the completion of the \$1,250,000 university field house in time for the meeting of the Assembly. An auditorium capable

of seating more than 10,000 persons was thus made available.

The Committee of Five representing the World Council on the selection of a site finally voted in favor of Northwestern as host to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, to be held August 15–31, 1954. "This is the biggest thing that's ever happened to Evanston," declared the secretary of the Evanston Chamber of Commerce.

Professor James and Chaplain McLeod selected a Committee of 100 (later 300), comprised of prominent citizens, to make their efforts more effective. At one of its meetings President Miller announced that the university planned a student chapel in the John Evans Center, which was to be named the James Chapel in honor of Professor James.

What has been accomplished by the World Council of Churches?" was the first question to be asked by possible promoters of the plan. The official reply was in part stated as follows:

Its member churches have stayed together, continued to discuss their problems and to work together. Its fellowship had increased in numbers and strength. It had sent over \$20,000,000 and 25,000 tons of clothing to help people and Christian institutions through the aftermath of the war. It had held a world theological conference and conducted study work on a world-wide

scale, seeking to relate Christian concepts to man's increasingly complex and bewildering life. Christian statesmen at the United Nations had been reassured that they have the moral backing by Christians of many lands. Ecumenical youth work camps had experienced a richer, fuller Christian fellowship.

At the dedication of the James Chapel on April 16, 1953, President Miller presented a plaque, to be placed in the chapel, reading as follows:

This Chapel is named in honor of a man whose integrity and character richly merits the name of Christ. For thirty years as head of our History Department and for eighteen years Dean of our Graduate School, he has been a devout Methodist Layman and servant of his community. His labors have been a principal cause of the coming of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches to Northwestern in 1954. This place of worship is hereby dedicated to James Alton James, Ph.D., LL.D., by a grateful University.

In reply to the presentation Professor James asked that the name be "The James Chapel," in view of the fact that Mrs. James had also devoted her life to the welfare of the students.

On May 18, 1954, at one of the centennial dinners,

the following testimonial was presented to Professor James by President Miller:

Your friends in Evanston, and there are many of them, want you to know of their esteem for you. You have contributed so much to Evanston, to Chicago and to the State of Illinois that it seems altogether appropriate for us to express our gratitude.

In a multitude of ways you have served your own First Methodist Church, but your influence has spread significantly to the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, to the Evanston Council of Churches, and to the World Council of Churches. It was you who first envisioned the possibility of bringing the World Council of Churches meeting of 1954 to Evanston, and your persistence that resulted in the consummation of your dream. While there were many skeptics, you insisted it should be brought to Northwestern.

A prophet is "one man who makes the many see," and in every sense you have been a prophet. You have led the churches to a deeper unity by your own devotion to the common life of the churches working together. You have earnestly sought and labored for whatever was good for the community. You have worked incessantly and self-forgetfully in the service of the good things.

Evanston owes a great deal to you, and on this occasion we want you to know of our affection for you,

our admiration for your spirit, and our respect for the quality of your mind.

With every good wish and may God bless you,

Very sincerely,

John R. Kimbark

Mayor of Evanston

Harold A. Bosley

Pastor of First Methodist Church

L. Melvin Nelson

Chairman Evanston Council of  
Churches

J. Roscoe Miller

President of Northwestern  
University

William C. Martin

President of National Council of  
Churches

On the opening day of the Assembly, the Chicago Midwest Area Assembly cooperated in a program by providing a "Festival of Faith" in Soldier Field, Chicago. One hundred thousand persons were in attendance. Further marking the occasion, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented a special concert of church music at Ravinia Park, and the Chicago Art Institute held a noteworthy display of religious art. It was estimated that at least ten million persons viewed television programs featuring Assembly events and person-



alities. The *Voice of America* sent programs to other countries in Arabic, Greek, Hungarian, Russian, Armenian, English, Swedish, and Danish. The Far East Broadcasting Company prepared material to be transmitted to Burma, China, and the Philippines.

On the afternoon of August 19 a special convocation of the World Council of Churches was held in Deering Meadow. Twenty-five thousand persons assembled at four o'clock in order to hear the address by the President of the United States, the Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, and to witness the conferring upon him of the honorary degree of doctor of laws by President Miller of the university.





## CHAPTER XI

### *The Citizen*

**P**ROFESSOR James engaged in many activities, aside from those concerned with Northwestern University and with religious matters.

*Chairman of the First Illinois State Park  
Commission*

FOR SOME YEARS there had been a movement on the part of the federal government and a number of the states to acquire, for the benefit of the people, areas of land which were noted for historic interest and beauty of scenery. By 1909 four million acres in thirteen different localities had been set aside by the federal government for park purposes, and the people in a number of the states had been benefited through the establishment of state parks.

In Illinois the Chicago Geographic Society, some of the women's clubs, and individual citizens urged the appointment by the legislature of a commission to report on the acquisition of Starved Rock and other regions within the state having historic interest or scenic beauty which would make them desirable for state park purposes. The petition was received with favor by the General Assembly in 1909, and an act was passed which provided for the appointment of a commission of five members to make a survey of these places.

On October 11, 1909, Professor James was appointed a member of this commission by Governor Charles S. Deneen, and was elected chairman. The other members of the commission were Alexander Richards, Ottawa, secretary; Mrs. John C. Ames, Streator; Mrs. Frank Corn, Chicago; and Dr. W. W. Atwood, professor of geography, University of Chicago. In addition to Starved Rock, the investigations of the commission included the White Pine Forest, the Cahokia, or Monk's Mound, and Fort Chartres. They finally concluded that Fort Chartres was primarily interesting from an historical standpoint; Monk's Mound historically and archaeologically; and the White Pine Forest, because of its white pines and hardwood trees. But Starved Rock, appealing to lovers of history, geology, forestry, botany, and natural history, was not surpassed in the Middle West for scenic

beauty. Because of these qualities and the fact that the Starved Rock area under private ownership was visited by some twenty-five thousand people annually, the commission concluded that if the state decided to establish a system of public parks and forest reservation reserves, the area that could be immediately enjoyed and made accessible to the greatest number of people should be the first one for favorable consideration.

### *Historical Importance of Starved Rock*

IN PRESSING FOR FAVORABLE ACTION on the part of the legislatures, Professor James presented a large amount of testimony. The French explorer La Salle had hoped to make it the center for the western fur trade. His imagination built up an empire in the valley, which would lead to the dominance of French power in the New World, and he began to make grants of land to his followers according to the feudal law.

Starved Rock (Fort St. Louis) was the scene of numerous conflicts between tribes of Indians in the early part of the eighteenth century. In 1769 Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas, while on a visit to Cahokia, was killed by a Kaskaskia Indian. To avenge his loss, the Ottawas, aided by the Potawatomi, began a war of extermination against the Illinois. The remnant of this tribe finally sought refuge on what is now called

Starved Rock, the site of Fort St. Louis. Driven to desperation by hunger and thirst, they tried to cut their way through the ranks of their besiegers. In their enfeebled condition, they were an easy prey for the enemy, and all save eleven perished. No tribe ever again bore the name *Illinois*.

Upon approval of the project by the legislature, Governor Deneen appointed a commission of three members, with Professor James as chairman, to acquire Starved Rock State Park. Professor James was also elected chairman—and Alexander Richards, secretary—of the commission which acquired and established the park. Numerous editorials in newspapers throughout the state applauded the accomplishment.

In 1912 seventy five thousand persons visited the park. In 1915 when Edward F. Dunne, a Democrat, was elected governor of Illinois he continued the appointment of Professor James as chairman of the State Park Commission.

*Establishes Fort de Chartres Park*

THROUGH THE EFFORTS of this commission Fort de Chartres was also secured as a state park. In recommending its acquisition as a park Professor James prepared the following statement on Fort de Chartres for the Governor of Illinois:

## *Establishes Fort de Chartres Park*

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During the year 1756, Fort Chartres was completed by the French. It was located on the Mississippi River, probably on the site of a French fort built in 1721, three miles north of the village of Prairie du Rocher. Travelers of the time speak of the new fort as the best constructed fortification in America. The masonry was so well done that the original walls were easily traceable. The power magazine showed only slightly the ravages of time.

This fort was the center of French influence in Illinois until their possessions were surrendered to the British in 1763. Because of the encroachment of the Mississippi River, the English abandoned the post and located at Fort Gage. This remnant of Fort Chartres is the oldest structure in Illinois and probably the oldest in the upper Mississippi valley.

## *Increase of Flow in the Chicago Drainage Canal*

IN 1926 THE TRUSTEES of the Chicago Sanitary District filed a petition for an increase of from fifteen hundred to twenty five hundred cubic feet per second of water to be diverted from Lake Michigan into the Chicago and the Illinois rivers. The drainage trustees contended that such flow was essential to dispose of

the sewage of the city of Chicago and adjacent territory. This petition was opposed by the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, and others. The matter eventually came before Charles Evans Hughes, who had been appointed Master in Chancery of the United States Supreme Court. Professor James was asked by the drainage trustees to act as historical expert on the case.

In his testimony, lasting three days, Professor James presented the evidence relating to what extent there had existed a water route connecting Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River, by way of the Chicago and the Illinois rivers, from the time of Marquette, Joliet, and other travelers to the year 1871.

Professor James W. Goldthwait, an authority on geography at Dartmouth College, had described the waterways that existed during the time of the French voyageurs and travelers. On the basis of his statements, the opposing states attempted to show that the movements along the Illinois, Chicago, and Des Plaines rivers were toward the lake rather than away from it.

The trustees, on the basis of Professor James' testimony, maintained that the route for commerce was down these rivers and that only in high water could the entire trip between Chicago and New Orleans be made by water with ships of eight or ten tons.

A large number of leading attorneys from various cities were retained in the case. Among the attorneys for the opposing states were Newton D. Baker, former



Secretary of War and a friend of Professor James in his Johns Hopkins days. As Professor James entered the courtroom, Secretary Baker said: "Here's Dean James. He knows more history than I do. I'm going back to Cleveland." Professor James was, of course, equally aware of Secretary Baker's recognized legal ability. Fortunately for Professor James, Herman Echern, a well-known Wisconsin lawyer and a leader of the Madison Wisconsin Bar, greeted him with the statement, "Dean James, what are you doing here on this case You're a Wisconsin man." "True," was the reply. "But my purpose is to present the evidence as I find it."

At one point an attorney representing the State of New York broke in with the question, "Well now, Dean James, isn't it a fact that travelers and fishermen tell large stories?" Feeling unable to answer that question by saying "Yes" or "No," Professor James appealed to Judge Hughes and asked, "Do I have to give a direct reply?" "Yes," was the ruling, whereupon Professor James answered, "*Some* travelers and *some* fishermen."

*Chairman of the Committee on History for Chicago's  
Century of Progress Fair*

IN 1933 PROFESSOR JAMES became the head of the

committee on history for the Chicago Century of Progress fair.

In that capacity he made plans for, and directed the building of, the Fort Dearborn exhibit. He also cooperated with the art department of Northwestern University in the preparation of a series of woodcuts depicting the history of Chicago. Concerning this exhibit the *Chicago Tribune* on February 18, 1934, stated:

The dramatic history of Chicago from the arrival of Marquette in 1673 to a Century of Progress in 1933 is pictorially presented in fifty-three linoleum cuts. Each cut is accompanied and interpreted by a written text prepared by Dr. James Alton James, Professor of History at Northwestern.

These prints were later shown in a Vienna exhibition, in the American Library in Paris, in two galleries in New York, and in galleries in various other cities.

Professor James sought the assistance of a committee designated as the Historical Committee of the exposition and made up of professors of history in Middle West universities, together with representatives of state and local historical societies.

To the general public Fort Dearborn became of special interest as indicated in a paragraph written at the close of the fair.

Old Fort Dearborn, blockhouse and stockade, has been a center of interest for millions of visitors. The interior is exactly as the fort was before the massacre. Weapons, household utensils, and other relics of pioneer days of a century ago make the fort a museum of our history.

Many of the articles in the fort were loans by citizens of Chicago and nearby Illinois communities. The collection was increased through Professor James' personal visits to a number of cities and towns in Indiana and Illinois and through advertising for objects desired. A Conestoga wagon was needed for one of the blockhouses. There was one in the collection of the Chicago Historical Society. It was believed to be the only one west of the mountains. A small number of these wagons, which were used by pioneers in crossing the mountains, were to be seen in museums of the East but could not be procured as loans. On a trip to a southern Indiana town, Professor James learned about a wagon carefully preserved by the owner of a farm because it had been used by his ancestors, who had come west in 1795. The record was checked. The purchase was made, and the wagon became one of the interesting objects to be seen in the Old Fort. At the close of the exposition this wagon was acquired by Henry Ford for his Greenfield Village collection.

*Develops New motive for Charitable Gifts*

IN THE FALL OF 1935 C. A. Hemphill, president of the Evanston Community Chest, and twenty-two members of the board of directors unanimously requested Professor James to act as general campaign chairman for their fall solicitation.

Professor James accepted the appointment and prepared the campaign literature. Most campaigns had hitherto been conducted on the basis of community loyalty and responsibility. Professor James added an additional reason for property owners to support the various charitable agencies. He strongly emphasized, and substantiated, the economy achieved when communities support charitable agencies through voluntary contributions, since the alternative would be taxation. He pointed out, for example, that members of the Visiting Nurse Association made 28,368 calls during 1934 and that this service would cost Evanston approximately \$288,000 if handled through public channels. The Visiting Nurse Association was asking for only \$19,500. "In other words," Professor James emphasized, "you get fourteen times as much for each dollar donated to this cause as if the cost were met by taxation." Professor James acted upon his philosophy that the financial campaign was an opportunity for educating the public not only as to the advisability but



When Professor James (far right) served as chairman of the Evanston Community Chest, among his co-workers were (left to right) Charles G. Dawes, former Vice-president of the United States, Rabbi Lorie Mann, and John Lewis.





## *Develops New Motive for Charitable Gifts*

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also as to the economy of voluntary giving, as opposed to the taxes which would be required if public agencies were to take over the job.

### *Evanston Associates*

BETWEEN 1930 AND 1940 PROFESSOR JAMES served as treasurer and member of the advisory board of seventeen of the Evanston Associates, a group concerned with plans for the beautification of Evanston. He was active in the organization and personally prepared material for publication and letters to the citizens of Evanston.

In addition to promoting the removal of debris and cleaning of the sand at all of the beaches, as well as planting shrubbery at numerous public places, Professor James was active in encouraging the establishment of a more extended park system for Evanston.

### *President, Seventh Ward Voters' Club*

IN 1943 PROFESSOR JAMES accepted the office of president of the Seventh Ward Voters' Club, a civic organization devoted to "the advancement of the neighborhood and the progress of Evanston." In the spring of 1943 this club procured an endorsement by



more than twelve hundred citizens of the candidacy of John J. Corcoran for alderman. It was also strongly instrumental in bringing about the decisive election of Judge Corcoran to the Evanston Municipal Court and of Harry H. Porter as chief justice of the court.

*Elected Trustee of Chicago Historical Society*

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Chicago Historical Society in 1925 Professor James was elected a trustee. He continued to serve as a trustee for twenty seven years. On his resignation in 1952 the following resolution was passed:

We, the Trustees of the Chicago Historical Society, regretfully defer to the request of Dr. James Alton James [to resign] as Trustee and Vice President. His fine scholarship, his wise judgment, and his many connections in the academic world have been at the disposal of the Society throughout the twenty-seven years of his service as a trustee, and the Society has benefited from them immeasurably. Its scholarly achievements have been a matter of particular concern to him, and it is largely through his efforts that the Society enjoys its high standing as an educational institution. We shall miss him both as a counselor and a friend.

*Who's Who in America*

ON MARCH 6, 1958, the publishers of *Who's Who in America* gave a dinner at the Arts Club in Chicago in honor of the thirty-one outstanding men and women whose biographies had been included in *Who's Who in America* continuously since the first edition of six thousand names published in 1898. Among those thirty-one persons were James A. James and Arne Oldberg, both of Northwestern University.



## CHAPTER XII

### *Mrs. James*

**I**N Professor James' active, interesting, and constructive accomplishments, until her passing in 1952, Mrs. James actively cooperated. She worked with and greatly assisted and inspired her husband in all his achievements. She was also active in many of her own interests in connection with Northwestern University, the church, and the community.

Shortly after Professor James came to Northwestern, Mrs. James became a member of the board of directors of the Chicago Y.W.C.A. In 1946 Mrs. James was largely instrumental in bringing the Y.W.C.A. to Evanston.

Mrs. James originated the plan for coordination of the activities of the various women's groups of the First Methodist Church of Evanston. That organization, the Women's Union, of which she was the first president, was so successful that the same plan was

adopted by many other churches throughout the United States. Mrs. James was the first president of the Women's Association, which was organized to procure funds for Northwestern University's women on the campus and which raised \$200,000 in 1940 toward the building of Scott Hall. She served as president of the University Guild and was the founder and first president of the University Circle, composed of the wives of the faculty of the university. She was one of the founders of the Evanston Inter-racial Council and of the Evanston Community Hospital.

Mrs. James loved their home at 2127 Orrington Avenue, Evanston, where she was the center of the fine family life of her husband and her two sons. She took her sons to Europe and spent many months there with them, enabling them to master the German and French languages and receive other educational advantages.

She had a continuing interest in the objects of art which had been collected in extended travel; in music, especially the piano; in the changing foliage of trees in the parkway; and in the beauty of their garden, with its many varieties of iris, peonies, and other flowers as they came into bloom; and at all times in counseling and advising with her husband on all their joint interests.

## C H A P T E R   X I I I

### *A Truly Great Record*

WHEN Professor James was given the honorary degree of doctor of laws at the Northwestern University commencement in June 1937, his citation epitomized his record:

Professor at Northwestern University from 1897 to 1935, for thirty years head of its department of history, and for eighteen years dean of its Graduate School; exponent of painstaking research in early Midwestern history, widely recognized biographer, productive member and occasional chief executive of state, regional, and national historical organizations; practical protagonist of moral reform, inter-church unity, and international peace; a wise and trusted student counselor, an inspiring colleague, a helpful neighbor, an active participant in every worthy community activity.

The *Evanston Review* recently stated:

Few men in their lifetime influence so many. Generations of students knew him as professor, dean, and friend; generations of townspeople as church and community leader. He came to Northwestern in 1897 as a young man of 33; he was still a familiar figure on Evanston's streets at 96. He remained alert and interested. Evanston will not be quite the same without him.













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